DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 176 SO 015 795

AUTHOR Taylor, Sandra C.
TITLE Vietnam through a Different Lens: Fiction, Memoirs, and History.
PUB DATE 8 Apr 84
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Organization of American Historians (Los Angeles, CA, April 8, 1984).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Fiction; *Literature; Modern History; *Nonfiction; *Personal Narratives; Social History; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Vietnam War

ABSTRACT

Literary accounts help society gain a better understanding of the Vietnam War by providing coverage missing from historical accounts of this period. Literature on the Vietnam War has focused on a number of issues: America's initial involvement in Southeast Asia, the American perspective on the war, the experience of the American soldier, and the experience of people at home. Major themes are the moral implications, violence, racism, and personal consequences of participation in the war. Much of the importance of fiction and memoirs lies in their ability to depict the world of the combat soldier and to present the moral dilemma posed by this particular war. The most recent works on the war indicate that the basic question involved in interpreting the Vietnam experience--deciding whether the war was a war like any other or a unique experience in American history--is still unresolved. None of the literary works on Vietnam provide an overview of the war as a whole. While literature does not answer the fundamental historical questions that historians have raised concerning the Vietnam War, it does provide a vital human dimension of the war which complements historical treatments. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sandra C. Taylor
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED247176

SO 015 795

VIETNAM THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS: FICTION, MEMOIRS AND HISTORY

Sandra C. Taylor

University of Utah

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Los Angeles, California, April 8, 1984.

America's longest war captured the literary imagination at the same time -- the 1960s and 1970s -- that academics, journalists, and former policy makers were grappling with it. Just as the professional historians have yet to produce the definitive account of the war, we have probably not seen its ultimate portrayal in fiction. But it is not for lack of trying; the list of books about the war lengthens yearly, despite numerous observations that publishers shy away from books on Vietnam because they don't sell -- the war was too unpopular.[1] Vietnam was a hard war to capture in prose: As one writer observed, its "sorry distinctions" have exerted some "curious effects on the literary attemps ... to capture its singular qualities."[2] Novels shade into memoirs, and we have recently been treated to collections of snippets like Al Santoli's Everything We Had, as if one person's reminiscences were not sufficient to convince us of the war's horrors.[3] This may be oral history, but as a patchwork it becomes a series of images as disjointed as uninterpreted note cards.

This essay, however, is not concerned with the success of Vietnam books as pieces of literature, but rather with their value as reflections of or elaborations on history. We can, for these purposes, consider the various literary works on Vietnam as pieces of a puzzle. The puzzle is the war itself,

not only the twenty-five years of its history, but its aftermath in the nation's experience and it the lives of those whom it affected. Hayden White has stated that the difference between history and fiction lies in the fact that the historian "finds" his stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his. However, he maintains that the historian also invents, for he must find significance in events by assigning meaning to different parts of a chronicle, a listing of happenings -- in other words, he must determine what is the beginning, the climax, and the end.[4] If we accept that premise, then history and fiction are not so far apart. Yet, as Peter Gay has reminded us, truth is an optional instrument of fiction, not its essential purpose, while to the historian truth is the principal concern.[5] While writers, even those purporting to relate their own experiences, can exercise artistic license, most historians have purposes different from the creation of art. They are interested finding the truth about basic questions on the war: Why did the United States intervene? Was that intervention legal? What was the nature of the conflict prior to American intervention? Was it a civil war, a revolution, or a case of one sovereign state, North Vietnam, invading another independent entity, South Vietnam, which then called upon the U.S. for assistance? What underlay Viet Minh resistance to the French and later Viet Cong opposition to the governments in the South? Were these movements nationalistic or totally communist-inspired, their strategy based in unchanging theory? Could creative diplomacy have weaned Ho Chi Minh away from his communist heritage? Why did the N.L.F. win such support in the South?

One can construct an almost endless list of questions that still trouble historians about that war. Military historians are locked in fierce debate

over the strategy America employed -- attrition and gradual escalation -- and the effect of political constraints on military decision-making. The actions of the Nixon administration, as yet minimally explored, raise even more questions. Was "Vietnamization" merely a facade to get American combatants out of the war? To what degree were Vietnamese interests sacrificed to big-power concerns? Did the United States "sell out" South Vietnam in the Paris Peace Accords, or were they the best terms we could have obtained?

And what of legacy and lessons? Perhaps we of the Vietnam generation are still too close to the war to be totally objective in our perspective on these matters, but the debate over what America learned (if anything) and what the ramifications are for the future is certainly with us. The effects of the conflict on American society are equally provocative. Was the protest movement an exercise in futility whose only lasting achievement was, as John Mueller contends,[6] the election, twice, of Richard Nixon? For historians these questions and others are the heart of the matter.

Literary critics like Philip Beidler and Peter McInerney have found in fiction the true meaning of the war, whose essence was, according to McInerney, a "hopeless tangle of experimental fact and projected common myth," a story whose telling would be a "fable without a last line, some unwittingly crafted exercise in chilling existential non sequitur."[7] McInerney has claimed that literature provides us with a "secret history," a deeper understanding which can be found only in fiction. Using Michael Herr's definition in Dispatches, he characterizes the war as a mystery of events whose history is interior and not available to scientific historiography. Herr himself claims that his work, which is almost stream-of-consciousness, is pure history,

a more realistic portrayal of the essence of the conflict than any scholarly treatise. McInerney cites as further evidence of the debate over the ability of scholars to understand the war purely as history the controversy over Guenter Lewy's America in Vietnam; Richard Falk and other reviewers virtually accused Lewy of writing fiction because he failed to acknowledge the quasi-fictional evidence upon which he built his case.[8] McInerney implies that the essence of the war was not diplomacy or power politics, but its very uniqueness, its immorality. That, he contends, we can understand best through the memoirs of the men who fought it.

In a further attempt to understand the Vietnam War, two scholars Mary Bellhouse and Lawrence Litchfield contend that although the war was different only in degree from other conflicts, it clearly marked the loss of American innocence. Despite America's attempts to deny this, actions in Vietnam severely damaged the nation's moral credibility. Fiction, which dramatizes this point, serves as the nation's conscience, reminding us of our moral lapse.[9]

Fiction as "secret history" thus places upon that genre and its permutations quite a burden. I wish today to examine some of the questions about the war, to determine what pieces of the puzzle of Vietnam literature can supply and to suggest its limitations. For, I would contend, literature and history must serve as adjuncts in the task of giving meaning to America about the war. While historians claim their goal is the "truth," writers, particularly those who participated in the conflict, can provide a different insight into the Vietnam experience because they have viewed it through a different lens. Perhaps historians have not investigated the "secret history" of

the war because its very subjectivity has cast it beyond their realm. However, if the moral dilemma that war presented, both to the individuals who fought it and the nation that prosecuted it, is a fundamental concern, as I would contend, then history and literature can provide us with different perspectives that help us gain a better understanding of the conflict.

If literature is to serve that purpose, one must examine the writers' relationship to their subject. The majority who have written about the war were participants in it, either military personnel, like Philip Caputo, author of A Rumor of War, or journalists like Herr or David Halberstam, author of The Best and the Brightest and the novel One Very Hot Day.[10] Some, to be sure, have spent no time in Vietnam but use it merely as a setting. However, most can be considered as interested participant-observers. What they are telling us is their version of events. Sometimes their perspective is unique, though others have simply recast Vietnam in the time-honored war novel tradition, emphasizing the making of men, the forging of character under combat, the building of comradeship, the difficulties of leadership. Winston Groom's Better Times Than These,[11] exemplifies this, although it does raise some moral questions about the conduct of the war. Most authors, particularly those who wrote between 1975 and 1981, do stress the uniqueness of Vietnam, its particular horrors and senselessness, its nightmarish qualities. The best works cannot be categorized neatly as fact or fiction, but are, as Beidler suggests, "self reflexive attempt[s] to comprehend what can be known of the war within a dimension of consciousness at once incorporating both memory and invention."[12] Sometimes their medium is fantasy, as in Tim O'Brien's brillant Going After Cacciato, or even allegory, as in Robert Stone's Dog Soldiers. Both novels,

incidentally, won National Book Awards, but they have not established their position as timeless classics. At the other extreme in the fictionalized adventure story, Bat-21, the factually-based story of a downed flyer's escape from his would-be captors. This is a tale that could have been set in any modern war.[13] The literature is a mixed bag, into which we must dip selectively.

A basic piece of the Vietnam puzzle concerns the nature and manner of America's initial involvement. Only Graham Greene has dealt with the early 1950s, and his book, the classic The Quiet American, implies more than it states about the reasons for American concern.[14] America, in the guise of the innocent but well-meaning protagonist Alden Pyle, seeks to help a backward people find a "third way" between the oppressive colonial administration of the French and the potentially deadly rule of the communists. With the best of intentions (almost a foreshadowing of David Halberstam's The Best and the Brightest) the American brings aid, identifies an alternative political force, and proceeds to "assist," oblivious to the pain and disarray his intervention causes. His misguided efforts bring about his death -- a foreshadowing of America's ultimate defeat. No subsequent works attempt such a prior clarity; in fact, most seek ex post facto to understand what happened once we were there.

Greene's work can serve as a paradigm for the entire American experience, and certainly it must be the introduction to looking at literature as history. That the author was a British journalist in Indochina from 1952 to 1955 brings a special cachet to his words. The French journalist Bernard Fall spoke volumes about the reasons for France's defeat, but few American readers sensed

a lesson for America. The only other work to deal with the 1950s is William Lederer and Eugene Burdick's The Ugly American, in which Vietnam is thinly disguised as the fictional Sarkhan. As John Hellmann has noted, this book enabled Americans to go through ritualistic self-criticism, but promised that with a return to traditional American values they could defeat communism in Asia and avoid the fate of the "quiet American."[15] After all, what did Greene, an Englishman, know anyway about Americans?

Literature, while it portrays Americans well, is less able to provide us with a consistent, realistic portrayal of the other side. In part this reflects the inaccessibility of the Viet Cong to foreign journalists, but most did not attempt to understand the South Vietnamese either, with the exception of Gloria Emerson and a few other newspeople.[16] The Vietnamese are represented in fiction as victims, as killers, as gooks. Few authors even attempt to penetrate their mentality or motivations. Even Greene's depiction of Pyle's mistress, the Vietnamese woman Phuong, is strangely hollow. Larry Heineman's novel, Close Quarters, graphically depicts them as objects of senseless violence, as in the scene in which he depicts the soldiers of one unit brutalizing a Vietnamese prostitute or killing a prisoner of war, but most others have similar scenes.[17] The enemy -- and they were all the enemy -- was there only to be "wasted." Groom's novel, for example, opens with an episode where a South Vietnamese war cripple (whom we later learn is a top Viet Cong official) cheats some GIs in a money-changing deal. And these were the people on our side, the writer implies. Memoirs of captivity give a different picture but one that is tainted by the subject. The relationship between prisoner and guard is never one of equality, nor one where compassion or under-

standing usually come into play. If one takes into account the North Vietnamese attitude about the illegality of American intervention, their treatment of prisoners of war, while hardly humane, becomes at least understandable.

The novel The Traitors is exceptional in its attempt to portray Vietnamese revolutionaries as human beings and to validate their reasons for fighting. If the setting (captor-captive) is one in which stereotypes are the norm, author John Briley has created a setting in which the motives of the leading characters, both Vietnamese and American, are comprehensible. The Vietnamese characters are unusually sympathetic and their attempts to win the American captives to their side are portrayed as sincere, not as examples of the cruel "brainwashing" we have come to expect in this situation.[18]

The novel Saigon, an otherwise forgettable example of the "exotic East" genre, also attempts to make major characters out of the Vietnamese.[19] Author Anthony Grey attempts to depict the Indochina conflict through the lives of four families over a period of about fifty years. The French family appears properly decadent and exploitive. The American hero is sympathetic to Vietnam and far more knowledgeable and interested in the country's history and people than any "quiet American" would have been. But it is the Vietnamese families that appear most interesting. The members of one peasant family are brutalized by their French overlords, radicalized by their experiences into joining the Viet Minh, and remain dedicated communists who oppose in turn the Americans. The depiction of colonial exploitation on a rubber plantation gives us a graphic explanation for their radicalization. Likewise, when Grey describes an upper-middle class Vietnamese family that has served the French

administration, he makes understandable the passions that drive family members apart as their offspring are forced to choose between the radicals, their French patrons, and the American-backed Saigon regime.

Yet somehow one remains unconvinced. Grey's characters are at best stereotypes, caricatures of what history has told us must be the motivations of the Vietnamese. Rarely do we find in fiction as sensitive an attempt to understand the motivations that led Vietnamese to join the National Liberation Front as Frances FitzGerald undertook in Fire in the Lake.[20] For this reason, her work remains valuable despite being flawed by her uncritical sentimentality and dated by her emotional outrage against Richard Nixon.

What do the works of fiction and memoirs do best? Clearly much of their importance to historians and teachers of the war lies in their ability to depict the world of the combat soldier. A novel like Gustav Hasford's The Short Timers sets the stage for violence in its depiction of boot camp as a brutalizing, dehumanizing experience that can literally drive a man insane.[21] His novel is unusual in that it does not rely on the standard conventions of war fiction. We see none of the usual "war makes a man of you" pap, nor any of the glamorizing of male bonding that combat supposedly produces. There is no suggestion that this author, unlike many others, is himself a "war lover," a term used with contempt by Marilyn B. Young in her discussion of the works of Caputo and Her a decade ago.[22] Hasford makes no attempt to rationalize these men's actions in terms of a higher patriotism; they have become trained killers who behave brutally toward any Vietnamese, whether male or female. One of the work's most dramatic scenes, in fact, relates how, during the retaking of Hue in the Tet offensive, the men track down a sniper who has

killed several of their comrades. When they locate the sniper they discover a young Viet Cong woman, wounded by their fire. They take almost pathological relish in killing her and then mutilating the body. Hasford not only expresses their violence, but he dramatizes their racist and sexist natures as well in his depiction of the event. He does not even redeem these men at the book's climactic ending. They become trapped in an ambush. In order to lead any of the men out alive, the platoon leader must kill his own wounded to prevent the sniper from picking them off one by one as they seek to aid the first casualties. He does so in an almost callous fashion. Killing had become so automatic that even "wasting" one's own is possible. Certainly to this author this particular war is a corrupting and brutalizing experience, fought for no purpose and to no noble end.

It is the moral dimension that gives Vietnam fiction its compelling nature. Classic examples of this remain Caputo's A Rumor of War, perhaps the best treatment of the moral dilemma in which an officer finds himself when the horrors of combat and the deaths of his friends push him into accepting the notion that killing any Vietnamese, proven guilty or not, is acceptable. Ron Kovic's Born on the Fourth of July, while not as artfully crafted, emphasizes the pointlessness in his memoir; his patriotic motivation in enlisting becomes the ultimate irony when he comes home a paraplegic.[23] Both authors emphasize that Vietnam inspired its participants to commit atrocities, mitigated only by its lack of clear purpose and senseless nature.

Has the passage of time made a difference in the portrayal of the war? Do recent works, the "new literature of Vietnam," as Beidler has termed it, take a different approach?[24] The "New Revisionism" has brought forth works

both more dispassionate and more hawkish;[25] yet this approach is less apparant in literature. Clearly American writers have come a long way from Graham Greene, who condemned the American experience even before it had really begun, but they have yet to reach consensus on what the Vietnam experience was. One has only to compare two very recent works on the war, John DelVecchio's The Thirteenth Valley and Robert Mason's Chickenhawk to discern the problems. These two books demonstrate that the basic question of interpreting the experience, of deciding whether this was "a war like any other war" or something unique in the American experience with overwhelming consequences for the soldier and the nation, remain unresolved.[26]

That the first of these books is a novel and the second a memoir need not trouble us, since the line between these forms is fine. Both are straightforward narratives, written by men who served in Vietnam. DelVecchio's novel, which does not appear to be autobiographical, seeks to recreate as accurately as possible the military aspects of the conflict by depicting an operation to locate and destroy a North Vietnamese Army outpost in a remote valley notable for its lack of a civilian population. Mason, on the other hand, has chronicled with almost dispassionate clarity his year as a helicopter pilot and its continuing repercussions in his life. DelVecchio's novel is set in the period of Vietnamization, the spring of 1970, while Mason served in 1966-1967.

What do these works tell us about why the nation or these individuals were at war? Mason is frank; he was a pilot and had always wanted to fly helicopters. Where but the army could he, a poor young man, learn to do that? He became a skilled technician, but he never lost his own doubts about the cause. He states that he had no quarrel with the Viet Cong and couldn't understand

why America should care if they wanted to make their country communist or not. He fought because it was his job as well as his duty, but he preferred flying "slicks," transport helicopters, to piloting a gunship.

DelVecchio, on the other hand, avoids most of the moral issues the conduct of the war raises. He does set up elaborate and rather contrived scenes where his characters, the usual melting-pot platoon, while away their idle time by discussing the reasons for American involvement. One character, a chicano, relates with detail that would make a college history professor envious the history of French colonialism and the rise of Ho Chi Minh. His own ethnicity makes him sympathetic to a colonial people seeking self-determination, yet he is properly anti-communist. He leaves the naive WASP hero bewildered; is this a war worth fighting? The black lieutenant speaks for the author and spells out all the conventional reasons: the need to stop communism, America's duty to the world and so forth. He also admits to himself that without a cause the men would lack the will to fight. He convinces himself and his men, if not his readers, that this is indeed a noble venture worthy of the sacrifice of one's life.[27] Only James Webb in Fields of Fire has given us a better example of the "melting pot platoon," and his outcome places him clearly on the side of those for those whom this war was totally justified.[28]

It this a war like any other war? To DelVecchio it is. He implies that one can question the reasons for any war; the soldier's task is simply to fight it and win. His novel is remarkable for the absense of violence against noncombatants: he gives the reader no reason to see this conflict as immoral in its conduct. The enemy uses unconventional tactics, to be sure; they are

dug in in tunnels that honeycomb the valley, the entrances are often booby-trapped, and the Americans must rout them out. The valley is enemy territory, criss-crossed with supply routes, and the Americans approach it at a disadvantage which their superior firepower can only partially overcome. The terrain favors the natives; the Americans suffer from heat and cold, for this is mountainous terrain. The dense foliage, the rain and humidity, and the rugged landscape which they must cross to meet the enemy all work against them. The nature of the fighting is of course pure Vietnam in its reliance on massive firepower. This is not the second world war, but in any conflict the tactics and the technology are inevitably unique to that time and place.

To Mason Vietnam is indeed different. Although it is the only war he has ever known, it clearly is more than just combat against a rival army. He sees acts of senseless brutality against civilians, he lives in a camp where random and sporadic violence is common and absolute security and a sense of safety are unknown. He delivers men to their deaths, and he retrieves their broken bodies. He flirts with death himself, landing his chopper in hot LZs and taking off under fire in conditions where only his superior flying skill enables him to survive.

These conditions take their toll on his mind if not his body, and foreshadow the war's aftermath. Mason's psychological problems begin even while he serves. He wakes up, covered with sweat, convinced he is under attack. He then has trouble flying, occasionally blacking out. The medics give him tranquilizers so he can sleep, but they are only temporary palliatives. While one can dismiss this, saying that battle fatigue is a problem in any war, one cannot help but feel that there is something about Vietnam that is getting to

Mason. This is not a war like any other war.

Mason's problems lead us to the aftermath, to Vietnam and its lessons. For Mason there was definitely a legacy; an inability to cope with civilian life, to find a place, and a continuation of the psychological problems that had plagued him in his last months in Vietnam. He demonstrates what the psychologist Robert Jay Lifton has described in his study of the veterans, Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans Neither Victims nor Executioners[29]. The war left a mark on those who served that was unlike the aftermath for any other comparable group of veterans. Post Vietnam Syndrome and the effects of Agent Orange are proof that this was no ordinary war. Its legacy for the veterans seems an endless catalogue of horrors.

And what of the home front? We can learn much of that story from C.D.B. Bryan's Friendly Fire and Gloria Emerson's Winners and Losers. Bryan reminds us of the terrible toll the war took on the parents and families of those who served, and gives meaning to the trite phrase about men "dying in vain." Emerson portrays with vivid emotion the lives of people on both sides of this conflict, and leaves the reader no doubt about her feelings of its immorality.[30] But perhaps the most imaginative depiction is to be found in Stone's Dog Soldiers, which on the surface has little to do with the war in Vietnam. However, Stone shows how the war corrupted American society at its very core, turning ordinary people into killers and spreading its poison like a drug through all our veins.

To return to the beginning, one must ask if these bits of the puzzle are indeed clues to history that can amplify what historians and other scholars have produced. These works are intensely personal narratives or microcosmic

episodes that give no overviews of the war as a whole. While many writers perhaps are "war lovers" who see this war as a glorification of manhood, the ultimate machismo trip, a rite of passage marked by individual heroics and failings, by no means are all. While some glorify combat and seek to justify this conflict, there is an even stronger representation of the opposite point of view. Not all the authors found the war's experience enriching or ennobling. To Caputo the moral implications of his actions were staggering. To Hasford and Heineman the war epitomized blind obedience, senseless violence, and a clear and explicit racism. Briley suggests and the other side was right. Mason makes clear the enormous personal consequences inherent in participating, even for one who committed no particular atrocity.

Curiously enough, a marine corps major has unwittingly sought to provide an answer to the proponents of the "secret history" concept. Major A. C. Zinni argues that the authors of fiction and memoirs on the Vietnam War are mere "peddlers who debase the events and the men who fought there."[31] He deplores the tendency he finds toward sensationalism, the implication that atrocities and brutality were "routine occurrences commonly accepted by all." As far as he is concerned, "war can be experienced, but it cannot be explained, described, or defined." It is too personal to be generalized, and each man's experience of it is unique. He concludes by giving the whole mess to the historians, who can "put all the facts and events into a neat, cold order that will belie the confusion, emotion and courage that existed."[32] The major is, I fear, way off target. The authors who have tried to capture the experience of Vietnam are not, by and large, sensationalists, nor have they given us literature devoid of universal truths. To say that they have is to

deny the ability of anyone, writer or historian, to recapture the past and give it meaning for a future generation. If historians' "neat, cold order" leaves out the emotion and intensity of combat, it is the task of the writer to supply it, for that is indeed a major contribution of the writers of these "secret histories." They provide the part of the puzzle missing from the official documents, the human, individual dimension. They remind us that men fought this war, for reasons both good and evil. When they present us with morality plays, in which the war's deadly and ambiguous nature became apparant, they remind us not to confuse the war with the warriors. Most of the latter were caught in situations not of their making, where the circumstances made it easy to commit acts of atrocity or at least senseless violence. Their perspective is necessary, but it is not "the" history of the Vietnam War. It is only a part of it, for it does not answer any of the larger fundamental questions historians have raised, as replete with bias as any other. Yet the writers present a valuable perspective precisely because their work deals with the intangibles, the realms of feeling and subjective truth that historians cannot uncover. Both perspectives, the literary and the historical, work together, providing the student of Vietnam a multi-dimensional picture of the war he would otherwise not have. Perhaps the combination will bring us closer to the truth.

NOTES

1. Martin J. Napersack, "The Vietnam War Nove," The Humanist, (July-August, 1979), 37. See also Margaret Stewart, "Death and Growth: Vietnam War Novels, Cultural Attitudes, and Literary Traditions," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, 1981, pp. 11-12.

2. Pearl K. Bell, "Writing About Vietnam," Commentary, (October, 1978), 74.

3. Al Santoli, Everything We Had (New York, Random House, 1981). See also Mark Baker, Nam (New York, Quill, 1980).

4. Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteeth-Century Europe (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 6-7. This was Norman Mailer's premise in Armies of the Night: History as Novel, the Novel as History (New York, 1968).

5. Peter Gay, Style in History (New York, Basic, 1974), reprinted by McGraw-Hill, 1976), pp. 191-92.

6. John Mueller, War, Presidents, and Public Opinion (New York, 1973).

7. Philip D. Beidler, American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam (Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 195.

8. Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1978); Peter McInerney, "'Straight' and 'Secret' History in Vietnam War Literature," Contemporary Literature 22 (Spring, 1981), 190-92.

9. Mary A. Bellhouse and Lawrence Litchfield, "Vietnam and Loss of Innocence: An Analysis of the Political Implications of the Popular Literature of the Vietnam War," Journal of Popular Culture 16 (Winter, 1982),

157-174.

10. Philip Caputo, A Rumor of War (New York, Ballantine, 1978); Michael Herr, Dispatches (New York, Knopf, 1977); David Halberstam, The Best and the Brightest (New York, Random House, 1972) and One Very Hot Day (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1967).

11. Winston Groom, Better Times Than These (New York, Berkeley, 1978).

12. Beidler, American Literature, p. 140.

13. Tim O'Brien, Going After Cacciato (New York, Delacorte, 1978); Robert Stone, Dog Soldiers (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1973). William C. Anderson, Bat-21 (New York, Bantam, 1981). Gordon O. Taylor, "American Personal Narrative of the War in Vietnam," American Literature 52 (May, 1980), 296. Taylor notes the lack of lasting readership for either O'Brien or Stone.

14. Graham Greene, The Quite American (London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1955). This book is an "established point of reference for those interested in problems of literary response to the war." Taylor, "American Personal Narrative," 294.

15. John Hellmann, "Vietnam as Symbolic Landscape: The Ugly American and the New Frontier," Peace and Change 9 (Summer, 1983), 40-54. See John Newman, Vietnam War Literature, (New Jersey, Scarecrow, 1982), for an annotated bibliography of war literature. William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, The Ugly American (New York, Norton, 1958).

16. Gloria Emerson, Winners and Losers: Battles, Retreats, Gains, Losses and Ruins from the Vietnam War (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1972) attests to the inaccessibility of the Viet Cong and makes some attempt to understand the South Vietnamese that she knew. Victor ZKolpacoff's The Prisoners of Quai

Dong (New York, New American Library, 1967) presents us the classic picture of the stoic Viet Cong guerilla, suffering torture and death rather than betraying his comrades, but since Kolpacoff was never in Vietnam and professes no special expertise on the subject, his work, while exciting as fiction as limitations as an accurate portrayal of the enemy.

17. Larry Heinemann, Close Quarters (New York, Warner, 1982). Stewart's dissertation does a fine job of contrasting the way selected novels deal with such themes as brutality, comradeship, and the building of manhood.

18. William S. Long, The Traitors (Australians Ser.: No. III, 1981; New York, Dell, 1981).

19. Anthony Grey, Saigon (New York, Little, 1982).

20. Frances FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake (New York, Atlantic, Little-Brown, 1972), especially Chs. 1-4.

21. Gustav Hasford, The Short-Timers (New York, Bantam, 1980).

22. Marilyn B. Young, "Revisionists Revised: The Case of Vietnam," SHAFR Newsletter X (June, 1979), 3.

23. Ron Kovic, Born of the Fourth of July (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976).

24. Beidler, American Literature, p. 139.

25. See, for example, Lewy, America in Vietnam. Fox Butterfield, "The Vietnam Scholarship," New York Times Magazine, February 13, 1983.

26. John DelVecchio, The Thirteenth Valley (New York, Bantam, 1982) and Robert Mason, Chickenhawk, (New York, Viking Press, 1983).

27. DelVeccio, Thirteenth Valley, pp. 237-77.

28. James Webb, Fields of Fire (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1978).

29. Robert Jay Lifton, Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans Neither

Victims nor Executioners (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1973).

30. C.D.B. Bryan, Friendly Fire (New York, Putnam, 1976); Emerson, Winners and Losers.

31. Maj. A. C. Zinni, "The Story That Won't Be Told About the Vietnam War," Marine Corps Gazette, (February 1979), 58.

32. Ibid.